

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK

May 29, 2007
Governor's Conference Room
Capitol Building
HELENA, MONTANA

May 29, 2007

Department of Livestock Board Room

Call To Order

Chairman Bill Hedstrom called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m.

Attendance:

Board of Livestock

Bill Hedstrom, Meg Smith, Janice French, and Stan Boone. George Hammond, Becky Weed, and Linda Nielsen were absent.

Department Personnel

Christian Mackay, Executive Officer; George Harris, Centralized Services Administrator; Rob Tierney, Bison Management; Dr. Jeanne Rankin, Acting State Veterinarian, and Sherry Rust, Executive Secretary.

Public

Suzanne Lewis, Yellowstone Park Supervisor; Dr. Lennis Knight, USDA APHIS AVIC; Governor Schweitzer, Hal Harper/Mike Volesky, Governor's office; Jim Hagenbarth, producer; Stephanie Seay/Josh Osher, BFC; Tom Lane, producer; Robert Seitz, producer; Bruce Malcolm, producer; Marty Malone, producer; Pat Goggins, producer/market owner; Justin O'Hare, producer; Duane Trevino, producer; Ken Cole, wildlife advocate; Bill Donald, producer; and a variety of other unidentified persons.

Brucellosis Update

Executive Officer Christian Mackay began the meeting by announcing that the latest test results, just received, were negative. He then reviewed the timeline of developments beginning with the initial positive animal.

Acting State Veterinarian Dr. Jeanne Rankin explained that the department, working with USDA APHIS, is in the middle of the investigation with contact and herd tracebacks being completed and appropriate testing ongoing. The Bridger herd is the only positive herd so far. The Emigrant herd will have to be retested in 30 days and again in another 30 days. The Bridger herd of 301 cows plus calves must be depopulated within 60 days. Appraisal and compensation is done through APHIS. She added that the source is unknown at this time and it is possible it may never be identified. Traceback and testing is a cooperative effort between APHIS and DOL with a department staff person on every team in the field.

Governor Schweitzer addressed the board reviewing the brucellosis issues in Wyoming and Idaho, noting that Texas does not have brucellosis status. He mentioned elk as a possible vector. In Montana the Yellowstone elk herd 2 to 3% of elk are reactors. Concerning his letter

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK

to Secretaries Johans and Kempthorne, Secretary of Ag replied but no reply at all from Secretary of Interior. His comment was the park (Yellowstone) has the brucellosis herd and they decide our (State of Montana) fate.

Fish, Wildlife and Parks reported that multiple species can carry brucellosis. Estimates are three to five thousand elk populate the Northern Yellowstone area. So the concern about bison is also true with other species.

Bison Management

Chairman Hedstrom updated the board on the latest hazing in the West Yellowstone area. Bison hazed back into the park are not sticking. National Park Service allowed department personnel to push way back to Cougar Meadow still didn't stick. He asked for input from board members on the next step.

Dr. Rankin said there have been about 100 calves born out of the park. May 15 is the deadline for bison to be in park and June 15 we will have cattle and calves on the park border. Now is the time to decide what to do with bison outside the park. The options of capture and taking them deeper into the park or transport to slaughter were discussed.. Suzanne Lewis stated it is not a part of the IBMP policy to transport back into the park. Rob Tierney said two bulls were transported back into the Hayden Valley and released. It is feasible, requiring sorting either way. Hauling bison from West Yellowstone to Lamar Valley or Hayden Valley chances are better for them to stick. Normally transport is with horse trailers about 50 head at a time. Discussion continued on options available, questions concerning the population being over 3,000 target number and adjustments to management procedures (hazing etc).

The board concurred that immediate, hard decisions are necessary to protect the state of Montana and producers from the disease issue. Questions were asked concerning capture and test, no crew available to test, too many animals out anyway, and when could capture start. Rob said the capture facility is up and ready to use. He recommend capture and hauling begin the middle of the week because slaughter facilities are not open on the weekend. The capture facility can only handle 50 -75 head so he estimated that it will take 2-3 weeks to clean up the landscape.

According to 81-2-120, MCA, the state veterinarian has the authority to imitate capture and removal of diseased bison. The board as a whole supported and urged Dr. Rankin to authorize the capture and transport process. It was agreed to begin the process by contacting slaughter facilities and organizing capture personnel. Discussion ensued as to the fate of calves, because slaughter facilities will not take calves, they must be humanely euthanized.

Opportunity for Public Comment

Public comment included:

- concerns for producers/landowners near the park\
- solutions such as viable vaccine to clean up the eco system
- building fences to keep them in
- ranchers have the most at stake
- questions concerning appraisal methods

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF LIVESTOCK

overgrazing within the park increasing the dilemma
approximately 40% bison test positive – would not be tolerated in cattle
doesn't matter where it came from the disease is in wildlife and must be addressed

Details to follow

Adjournment

Chairman Bill Hedstrom adjourned the meeting at 4:20 p.m. .

BILL HEDSTROM, CHAIRMAN
BOARD OF LIVESTOCK